

TO BE A BARBIE - A FEASIBLE DREAM

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Abstract: *From friend to partner Barbie was winning a legion of fans, and there are many girls who idealize seem like a doll. The utopia of perfect body leads to questioning the immersion of technique in life, i.e., the junction of the bios with technè, the hybridity between the organic and the inorganic. The new technical possibilities provide a number of opportunities, and what was until then an aspiration, volition, is realized today in a right and a duty that is claimed. All differences are converted to deviations from the norm consisting of the slim body, perfect, a model to be imitated and desired. The body has achieved a status: the playfulness, beauty and happiness are transversal to the cult of youth as a fetish. Thus, body dissatisfaction assumes normative condition and can lead to body image disorders.*

Keywords: *Body image, plastic surgery; aesthetics; beauty; Technology; body dysmorphic disorders.*

1. Introduction

The playful, the game has a role in forming and shaping a child's development. Play as a child, is to form the personality of a mature adult.

When Barbie doll came, revolutionized and transformed the game itself, in that it changed the places of play.

Barbie did not lend more to play as mother and daughter, but to play as older friend. Not more than played, but with. In this sense, Norman (2004, p.3-4) noted that "The objects of our lives are more than mere possessions. (...) We take pride in them, not necessarily because they appear to wealth or status, but by the meanings they bring to our lives "(Donald Norman, 2004, pp.3-4).

Barbie already came with its own name and personality "ready". The world of Barbie was hers, pink, complete and perfect.

So play changed the verb invented to mimic.

Barbie surpassed decades and the marks of time inexorable didn't shake her. Therefore, Barbie is an image, a current model, which illustrates contemporary demands in that this is a transcultural phenomenon. Perhaps for this reason, dissatisfaction and preoccupation with physical appearance are common and assume normative condition in general population (Phillips et al., 2010, De Brito, 2011, p.114).

In fact, Barbie has not aged, didn't get wrinkles, and time has not been ruthless with her. Regardless of the nuances that the doll was suffering, she remained the same, always young, slender incessantly with its curvaceous silhouette.

Barbie's wardrobe and accessories continue to be renewed and constantly follow the trends of the moment, they are object of desire for the fashion designers who identify her as a diffuser of style trends. From Balenciaga to Dior, from Chanel to Givenchy, there are many fashion brands looking for Barbie in terms of product market.

In the real world, Valeria Lukyanova, with striking similarities regarding the Barbie doll, is an Ukrainian model who is 21 years old. She is tall, skinny, slim, has a “wasp waist”, glassy blue eyes, long, straight and blonde hair, long and delineated eyelashes, plasticized skin, large breasts and abdomen smooth and incredibly “lean.” Valeria Lukyanova through her transfigured body, her wardrobe, her poses, the places where she travels in the field or in the city, at home or on the beach, stages a world in the image of Barbie.

This staging to the image of Barbie can lead to question if her existence is real. By observing the multiple images of Valeria Lukyanova we face with a perfect body that breaks with real bodies.

Is Valeria Lukyanova real, or a product of a sophisticated technology?

Is she a body in pixels? A non-body?

On the one hand, the fiction became reality and transfigured real bodies.

Moreover, with Barbie, the concept of beauty has become universal and lost its cultural, dynamic and relative character. It became an ideal form of beauty.



Figure 1: The real and the unreal in Valeria Lukyanova

Where Barbie ends and Valeria Lukyanova starts? What are the differences and the similarities? What is beyond and below the real?



Figure 2: Between the flesh and the plastic.

Through multiple images of themselves in multiple contexts, in divisible versions of themselves, Valeria Lukyanova reveals how the body is an unfinished project; how the body became suppleness, became elasticity. "Recovered as an instrument of enjoyment and exponent of prestige, the body then becomes the object of a labor investment" (Baudrillard, 1995, p.139). In this quest for perfection, "The body of many women today is a controlled body, mangled, who prefers darkness to hide their imperfections" (Mirian Goldenberg, 2010, p.152).

The body emerges as a place of scenery, as adornment, as a space of a changing body, as a field of transition and transformation. The body becomes raw material susceptible to permanently change, envisaged as a "becoming", which implies increased attention towards the retouch: "An unfinished work that still has so much to be done in a clear association with a "lego-body" marked by flexibility and multiple possibilities for change that forge an identity (Gama, 2011, p.100). "(...) Narciso has not lost in contemplation of your image (...), adopt prevention strategies, changes his diet, (...), protects him from the sun, exercise hard to regain form, corrects its appearance physics "(Lipovetsky, 2006, p. 219; De Brito, 2010, p.227).

We live in a time when the cult of the body has acquired added importance (De Brito, 2011, p.122-123). Historically, in all societies, people sought to achieve eternal youth, but today it is a duty to maintain the tapered shape without adiposity, or wrinkles. We never are too beautiful, or too perfect - there is a self-punishment on the imperfections of the body that keep us from achieving an ideal state. "At the time of anti-aging and anti-weight, the center of gravity has shifted from stealth techniques to prevention techniques, from rituals to fictitious maintenance practices of the body, from the artificial scenarios to the nutritionists constraints, from Baroque opulence to the operations for skin regeneration "(Lipovetsky, 1997, p.132; De Brito, 2010, 226, De Brito, 2011).

1.1 The fascination of Photoshop



Figure 3: The body as alter-ego.

Valeria Lukyanova became a phenomenon through social networks with her followers and detractors, but above all, with a plethora of images that feeds an imaginary through her facebook page, or her personal website, the Amatue.

Much has been speculated about the existence or nonexistence of Valeria Lukyanova. It will be a miracle of Photoshop? It will be a work sculpted by a "Pygmalion"? Regarding the miracle of Photoshop, Fernanda Scagliusi and Roberto dos Santos stated: "More and more studies show the deleterious effect (...) of the images to which women are exposed, lowers the self-esteem and contributes to body image disorders" (2011, p.31). Whether say that women have the power to distinguish the true from the false, the real from the unreal, we know that, today, any girl / woman is more exposed daily to a variety of images.

Photoshop illustrates how the real body is consumed as an image, this image could be crafted by a series of technical devices that provide new means to the body, the image can be made and remade.

Pascal Dangin is recognized as the 'most important retoucher of fashion photographs'. Art directors and advertisers rely upon to him "when they want that someone who looks less than great looks great, that someone who looks great seems amazing, or someone who looks already amazing - under DNA or MAC, seems superhuman". For the photographers who are attuned to the particularities of the digital, Pascal Dangin is a sort of "guide".

Pascal Dangin highlights that, he looks "for life as retouch. The makeup, the clothes don't cease to be to him mere accessories of being, (...) are just a transformation of what one wants to seem"

The prodigy of Photoshop enhances well how much the appearance can be invariably transformed and transmutable, toward a body that "breaks" with real bodies, a body ideal that is beyond the body, a body enhanced, retouched on the route of what it wants to be.

Thus, the utopia of perfect body leads to questioning the immersion of technique in life, i.e., the junction of the bios with *technè*, the hybridity between the organic and the inorganic.

The new technical possibilities gives a set of possibilities and what was until then an aspiration, a volition, is realized today in a right that is claimed and in a duty to which oblige. In the optical of Kerckhove (1997:33) "We are forever being made and remade by our own inventions."

In line with Foucault and Debord, it can be said that the bodies remain disciplined, submitted to the logic of the show and with a value in the market of appearances.

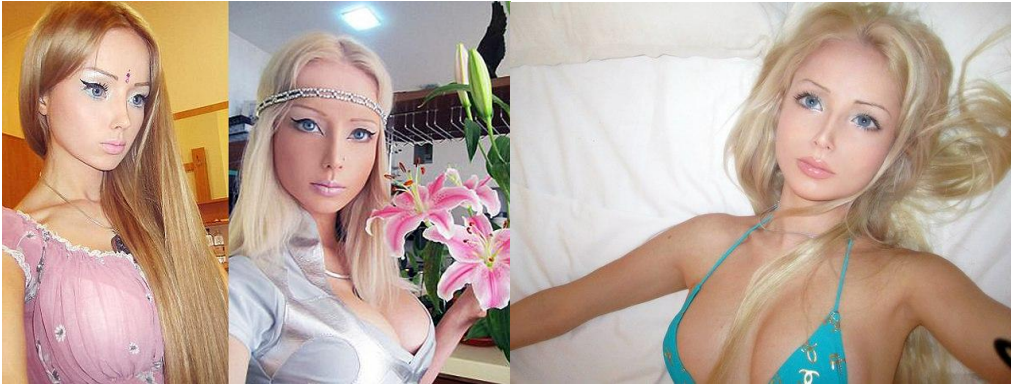


Figure 3: A body consumed as image.

By what paths go the contemporary values and models that guide human beings?

If, in the past, in the name of faith, the body was lowered to the expression of subversion, later it became a space of punishment, i.e., it is punishing a body that never reaches perfection. To Grugier (2003:223): "One thing is certain: our view of the body has changed radically with the power of science and technology on our environment". "If any part of the body can be transformed, something subversive, or demonic occurred in the beauty myth, the myth of the body without blemish" (Gama, 2011, p.139). From being emblem of the self, the body has become a kit, a sum of parts eventually tear on disposal of an individual, apprehended in handling of him and for whom the body is precisely the part of the capital personal assertion. The interiority of the subject is a constant effort of externality and it reduces to its surface. "Today the body is an alter-ego, a double, another self, but available to all modifications, radical and modular proof of the personal existence and view of an identity chosen provisional or durably" (Le Breton, 2003, p. 26).

It seems that the body has become a prosthesis in a self becoming permanent, which requires a continuous effort to work the body. "Salvation is dependent upon each of us and lives in a constant work on the modeling of the body and on the marks of time" (Gama, 2011, p.90). Following the thought of Lipovetsky we never were so relentless as to what resembles the fat, "flabby" or flaccid. It is no longer acceptable to have rounded shapes. Now, it's necessary shaping the body that we want refreshed, toned and firm, free of any hint of looseness, because "It's not enough to be plump, it is now to build a firm body, muscled and toned, free of any sign of loosening or sagging" (1997, p.134).

1.2 Beauty and love

a "look more"

the desire to be desired (Maria de Brito)

Is beauty that gives birth to love, or is love that gives birth to beauty?

Can one love someone for his beauty, or are we beautiful because we are loved?

Where and why every wish chooses to accommodate on this particular face, in that individual mouth or ear or nose and, why that neck curve, or spot, came to respond so precisely to certain criteria of perfection?

Desire can be found in awkward features, in those areas that others wouldn't look. Not necessarily would be an aggressive deviation from an ideal arrangement, but an original redefinition.

So, how does an individual satisfies the desire for beauty?

1.3 The distorted perfection

In the eyes of an individual with body dysmorphic disorder (preoccupation and extreme distress with physical appearance and loss of social and affective relationships), never satisfies. There is no way to convince him that it is something, beyond monstrously ugly.

He will insist, perhaps, to find his nose too small, or too big and shapeless, his mouth very wide, his jaw uninteresting, his ears huge, his eyes not blue enough, or his hands very large and his wrists too narrow. He will also reveal a sadness and shame, because his nose doesn't fit the dimensions of his lips. Eagerly, he will look at the faces and bodies of Vogue, Vanity Fair, Harper's Bazaar or MOB and he will declare that the concept of beauty - in light of his physical appearance - is a profound inconsistency. Simply, because beauty can be measured by an objective standard that he failed to achieve.

Thus, individuals with this mental disorder are linked to a platonic concept of beauty, an aesthetic that they share with the editors of fashion magazines and which feeds the daily feeling of hatred for himself in front of the mirror.

When we confuse beauty with perfection we stumble into a territory that no longer goes through what we can do, but what we should do. Moving to the order of duty, becoming an self-imposed, it is concerned about punish a body that "sins" by default or by excess. Thus, it can be said that, "in contemporary times, the man is a 'bio engineer', busy in the production of his identity, busy with the rectification and optimization of self" (Gama, 2010). Lord of himself, owner of himself, "(...) I am the owner of 'my' body. Fatal Illusion that first disease, minimal pain, easily destroys" (José Bragança de Miranda, 2002, p.66).

According to Platão and the magazines editors, there is an ideal form of beauty, made by the balanced relationship and the perfect harmony between the parties, that earthly bodies will remember to a greater or lesser degree. If Platão had said that only the qualities of measure (metron) and proportion (symetron) are invariably beauty and excellence, then on the face of one of these patients will be missing both beauty and excellence. Nevertheless, the human face inharmonies extend to the rest of the body and, invariably, when we are looking at the mirror we see a distorted image and we will declare that something is out of place.

Individuals with body dysmorphic disorder consider that almost everything in their body, could have been added, diminished or altered without spoiling yet what nature hasn't ruined. Therefore, they look for a plastic surgeon and types of surgical and aesthetic procedures.

1.4 The subjective theory of appearance

But it is exactly the details that arouse physical attraction. Beauty isn't like a mathematical formula, to the extent that the language of beauty can't fit in the language of signs and words.

Thus, it is not the beauty that is expected to describe, but the subjective reaction to the appearance. This view is similar to Kant's (expressed in his work the Critique of Judgment), since aesthetic judgments would be judgments whose ground of determination couldn't be other than subjective. Thus, the Kantian view of the aesthetic holds that the proportions of a body, ultimately, aren't as important as the subjective form in which this body is seen.

That is why the experience of satisfaction in plastic surgery is internal and subjective, since the great effects of plastic surgery are restricted to specific conditions of experiences of the body image (Brito et al. 2010). In fact, aesthetics responds to a psychic demand (Brito et al. 2010), so plastic surgery isn't the trivial transformation of a physical characteristic on the face or on the body (Le Breton 2003).

Thus, and particularly in the field of plastic surgery, to assess the perception is entering in a different field of the physical reality of medical results. Therefore, the concept of quality of life was introduced into

medicine at the instant when traditional results, such as mortality and morbidity, became narrow and inefficient to evaluate aspects also relevant in the field of health (Power, 2003). In addition, changes in quality of life ensure the importance of plastic surgery and its relevance as medical procedure (Brito et al. 2010).

So beauty can oscillate between ugliness and classical perfection. A face that shows one thousand qualities is not always architecturally formal. Nevertheless, there is a certain tyranny of perfection, even some exhaust on it, making it inhumanly unrealistic and insane.

True beauty can not be measured because it is floating, it has a few angles of which can be seen and even then not in all the lights and not at all times. It flirts dangerously with madness, takes risks to itself, it doesn't fit comfortably with mathematical rules of proportion, it draws its appeal just those areas that also serve the ugliness. Beauty may need to take a calculated risk of ugliness. A face brings potential of beauty and ugliness within themselves and the imagination has the role to stick to the precarious edge of beauty. As a secret.

What counts in fact, and for that reason it's so scary in general, and particularly in individuals with body dysmorphic disorder, is the mental landscape of the observer.

The danger with the kind of beauty that doesn't look like a Greek statue, is that its precariousness, and consequent weakness, puts much emphasis on the observer.

So when we put the beauty in the eyes of the beholder, what will happen when the beholder look elsewhere?

However, a subjective theory of beauty makes the observer wonderfully indispensable.

To Buonarroti (1545) "The heart is slow to love what the eye doesn't see." (Blunt 2001).

And for Da Vinci "the eyes are the windows of the human body, through which he perceives his way and enjoy the beauty of the world. Due to the human ability to see, the soul is content to stay in its bodily prison "(Da Vinci, 1935).

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